

HOT TOPICS

SPRING 2001

CURRENT ISSUES FOR ARMY LEADERS

THE BLACK BERET Symbol of Transformation



Your New Headgear: The Facts

Step-by-step Guide to a Proper Fit

SOLDIERS will don the black beret as the Army's new standard headgear when we celebrate our birthday on June 14. This change tests our willingness to adapt as a force and challenges leaders to ensure their soldiers understand how to wear the beret correctly.

This issue of **Hot Topics** is a step-by-step guide to properly wearing the new headgear. It also includes tips for grooming the beret, because preparation and care methods are not outlined in Army Regulation 670-1, "Wear and Appearance of Army Uniforms and Insignia." Soldiers from XVIII Airborne Corps share these suggestions based on tradition and years of experience wearing berets.

Switching to the beret will require patient, detailed direction from leaders at all levels. It will be everyone's business to make necessary on-the-spot corrections to ensure all of us wear our berets correctly. I encourage everyone to devote portions of unit training schedules and officer and NCO professional development training sessions to explaining standards of wear. Most units have soldiers who have previously worn berets, and those individuals should be identified and used as trainers and experts on the pride and traditions associated with wearing berets.

Army Chief of Staff GEN Eric K. Shinseki has told us the black beret will be a symbol of our excellence as the Army transforms itself in coming years. It will also signify our collective drive to guard America's freedom and promote peace in a turbulent world. Though we are confident of our skills and have no doubts about our commitment, the beret should be considered an emblem of our united strength.

I hope each of us will look upon the beret as a symbol of our status as the finest, most elite fighting force in the history of the world, and of our collective commitment to ensuring that remains true for another 200 years.



Jack L. Tilley
SERGEANT MAJOR OF THE ARMY



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Credits



A Sign of Our Greatness

“... the black beret will be symbolic of our commitment to transform this magnificent Army into a new force — a strategically responsive force for the 21st century. It will be a symbol of unity, a symbol of Army excellence, a symbol of our values. When we wear the black beret, it will say that we, the soldiers of the world’s best Army, are committed to making ourselves even better.”

— Army Chief of Staff GEN Eric K. Shinseki,
Association of the United States Army
Annual Convention
Oct. 17

“I like it. It’s better than the BDU cap, and it stands for a lot more.”

— SPC Michael Allen,
Fort Monroe, Va.

“We haven’t had any major uniform changes in a long time. It will give a distinct, elite look and is in concert with where we want to take the Army in the future.”

— COL Bill Brown,
Fort Monroe, Va.

“The truth of the matter is, the powers that be made a conscious decision for us as United States soldiers to actually be held to a higher standard. Wearing a beret is not about looking good in order to feel good, but my morale did improve when I wore one with the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment.”

— SSG Michael Adkins,
California Army
National Guard

“It was long in coming, but worth the wait.”

— CW3 Robert Sykes (Ret.)

Your New Headgear: **The Facts**

When are soldiers required to begin wearing the black beret?

June 14.

Do soldiers have to buy the beret or will it be issued to them?

All soldiers should have received their first beret in April through their unit supply systems. A second beret will be issued in October. Soldiers will be required to maintain both berets and may exchange them for new ones after they wear out since they are retainable, non-recoverable organizational items. Additional berets will be available for purchase through the Army and Air Force Exchange Service in January 2002.

Who will not be authorized to wear the beret?

Initial-entry trainees and cadets will not be authorized to wear the beret. This includes soldiers who are in basic or advanced initial training, Officer Candidate School, Warrant Officer Candidate School, Officer's Basic Course, Warrant Officer's Basic Course, military academies such as West Point, and the Reserve Officer Training Corps. These soldiers will be issued the beret at their first duty assignments.

Soldiers attending career-progression courses such as the Primary Leadership Development Course or advanced training within their military occupational specialty will be authorized to wear the beret. However, local commanders will determine authorized wear of the beret when courses include a mixture of initial-entry trainees and permanent-party soldiers who are reclassifying.

How is the beret properly worn?

See pages 6 and 7.

What insignia should be placed on the beret?

Officers wear their rank centered on the flash. Enlisted soldiers wear their distinctive unit insignia, or unit crest, centered on the flash.

Should soldiers dampen, shape or shave the beret prior to wearing it?

None of these steps is essential to wearing the beret properly. Army Regulation 670-1, "Wear and Appearance of Army Uniforms and Insignia," cannot prescribe methods of preparation for wearing the beret that are not approved by the



manufacturer or which might damage the beret. The manufacturer recommends dry cleaning only. Soldiers should check with their chains of command for information on preparation, just as they might inquire about alternative methods for shining boots or brass insignia.

❶ When wearing the beret with the class A and B uniforms, do soldiers blouse their trousers and wear boots?

Only military police and soldiers assigned to air assault-coded positions or ranger, airborne and special forces units may blouse their trousers with boots.

❷ May female soldiers wear the beret with a skirt?

Yes. Since the skirt is part of the class A and B uniforms.

❸ What if female soldiers' hairstyles are not conducive to properly wearing the beret?

Hairstyle standards outlined in AR 670-1 remain unchanged. Styles are judged appropriate based on how they meet the requirements of proper wear, regardless of headgear or the wearer's sex. Soldiers whose hairstyles do not allow a correct fit will have to alter their hairstyles. They may not pack their hair into the beret.

❹ Will there be a lining in the beret?

Berets issued as an organizational item will not have linings. Those available through the Army and Air Force Exchange Service may have linings.

❺ Will soldiers be responsible for having the Army flash sewn onto the beret?

Initially, all berets will have the Army flash sewn onto them. Some units will be allowed to select other flashes within the first year after issue. Units must have the replacement flashes sewn on since berets are organizational items.

❻ Will all units eventually have their own distinctive flashes?

Units that wish to have a distinctive flash must send a request through their major commands to the U.S. Army Institute of Heraldry. The current flash is universal and closely replicates the flag of the commander in chief of the Continental Army at the time of its victory at Yorktown.

❼ May soldiers wear a commercially procured beret?

Yes, but it must meet the same design specifications as the issued beret.

❶ Will the beret be worn with all uniforms?

No. It will be worn with utility uniforms (the BDU, maternity BDU, aviation BDU, desert BDU, hospital duty uniform, food service uniform, flight uniform, combat vehicle crewman uniform and cold weather uniform) and the service uniforms (class A and B uniforms).

❷ Will the beret eventually replace the BDU and garrison caps?

No. Initial-entry trainees and cadets will not wear the beret until they complete training and report to their first duty assignments. While in a trainee or cadet status, soldiers will wear the garrison cap with the hospital duty, food service and class A and B uniforms. The BDU cap will be worn with all other utility uniforms.

The beret will be the standard headgear in garrison. In the field, soldiers will wear the BDU cap if the commander authorizes them to remove their helmets.

Commanders may also allow the wear of the BDU cap on patrols, work details or on occasions when the BDU cap is more appropriate than the beret, such as in motor pools or other areas where the beret could become too soiled.

❸ When will AR 670-1 reflect these changes?

The regulation is currently in revision and will include references to the beret. Publication is expected to coincide with implementation of the beret policy.

❹ How will Active Guard/Reserve soldiers, Individual Mobilization Augmentees and Individual Ready Reserve soldiers receive their berets?

Army National Guard units will receive their berets from Lexington Bluegrass Depot, Ky. Reserve units will receive theirs from Fort Dix, N.J., and Fort McCoy, Wis. Both National Guard and Reserve units will issue the berets to their soldiers through their supply systems or a central-issue facility.

Since IMA and IRR soldiers are not assigned to units, they will not receive a beret until they are assigned to one.

Guide to Wearing the Beret

Ensure the beret is the correct size. Soldiers should typically wear berets the same sizes as their BDU caps.

Don the beret so that the edge binding (headband) is one inch above the eyebrows and fits straight across the forehead. The beret should be form-fitting across the head.

Center the flash and the stiffener above the left eye.

Pull the excess material down to the right side so that it touches the right ear but does not extend below the middle of the ear.

Tighten or loosen the adjusting ribbon for a secure fit.

Tie the adjusting ribbon into a non-slip knot and cut off the ends.

Tuck the ribbon knot inside the edge binding at the back of the beret.



Hair may not be packed into the beret, nor should it extend below the bottom edge of the front of the headgear or below the bottom edge of the back collar.

All headgear must be carried when not worn. It may not be hung from the belt or stored inside uniform pockets.

CORRECT WEAR



Edge binding one inch above eyebrows and straight across forehead. Excess material pulled down between the top and middle of right ear.



Form-fitting across the head. Edge binding straight across. Adjusting ribbon knot tucked inside edge binding.



Excess material pulled down between the top and middle of right ear. Form-fitting across the head.

INCORRECT WEAR



Edge binding not straight across. Excess material not pulled down between the top and middle of right ear.



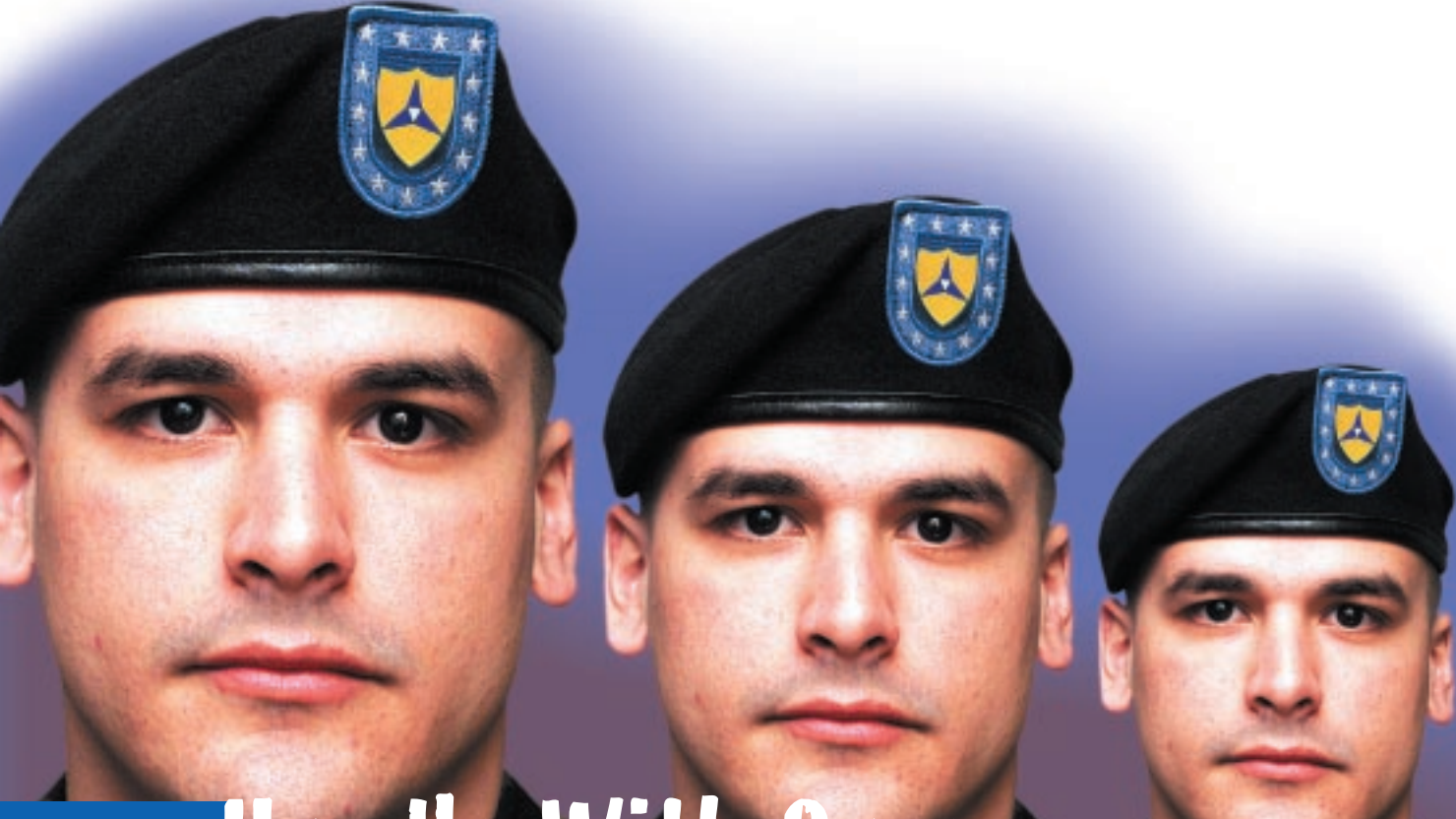
Edge binding not straight across. Adjusting ribbon knot exposed.



Adjusting ribbon not tightened for secure fit. Not form fitting to head.

HOT TOPICS

CURRENT ISSUES FOR ARMY LEADERS



Handle With Care

METHODS of grooming or preparing the beret for wear that are not advised by the manufacturer cannot be outlined in Army Regulation 670-1, "Wear and Appearance of Army Uniforms and Insignia." The manufacturer recommends dry cleaning only.

Since soldiers will not be reimbursed or reissued berets for damages caused by unauthorized preparation methods, soldiers should be careful if choosing such methods as shaping and shaving the beret. These suggestions are provided by the XVIII Airborne Corps and are based on years of soldiers' experience of wearing the beret:

- ⊙ Be cautious about wetting, soaking and freezing the beret, because the flash can become distorted and colors may bleed or fade.
- ⊙ Do not use warm water to wet the beret, because it could shrink.
- ⊙ Use a lint or soft-bristle brush to remove lint. Use of a razor may cut through the wool.

BOTTOM LINE The black beret becomes the standard June 14.